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Thoughts For The Month--October 2019
SIXTEEN-DIGIT TONAL SYSTEM (?)

Did you know that...in 1862..a man named John Nystrom invented something few would even believe it existed--then faded sometime later? Already for over 350 years people had to deal with using the same old digits of 0 through 9 (the Arabians were rumored to invent it, but the aforementioned Mr. Nystrom, in 1859, wanted extra numbers).

It's hard to find them on any computer--even on the "Character Map", but to the best of our knowledge here is what was said in the 1862-published book, called "Rproject of a New System in Arithmetic"--and with a little help from the modern Wikipedia:

"In the Tonal System it is proposed to add six new figures to the 10 arabic, thus:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, (A), 9, (B), (C), (D), (E), (F), 10, making 16 characters to form the base."

What the inventor was trying to say is that the new numbers (which wouldn't last too long) were in order the deflating letter J, the letter C in handwriting, the letter V in handwriting, the letter E (or mirror-image 3) in handwriting, the number 2 upside-down, and the small letter "f" with its tail pointing up instead of straight.

And from 0 to the unusual style of the "f", the numbers were identified as: noll (0), an (1), de (2), ti (3), go (4), su (5), by (6), ra (7), me (8), ni, ko (9), hu, vy, la, po, fy, and finally for the numbers 1 and 0 together "ton" when normally is should be 'ten'.

Continuing on up to what looks like our way of writing 20, the next 16 numbers used in the tonal system were tonan (11), tonde (12), tonti (13), tongo (14), tonsu (15), tonby (16), tonra (17), tonme (18), tonni, tonko (19), tonhu, tonvy, tonla, tonpo, tonfy, and deton (20). For the number 50 it was known as suton, and for 100 it was called "san".

Don;t expect the famous man appearing in the Verison phone commercial to try making a phone call with the tonal system (lol), or Drew Carey playing the Price Is Right game, "Any Number", trying to urge contestants to guess numbers appearing in the price of a car with the longer-digit option (lol again)! Thankfully we use only 10 numbers since maybe 1870--perhaps!

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